CLAIMS

1. A computer-based method for duplicating, onto one or more selected target computers, a software system installed on a source computer the method comprising:

retrieving an image of the source computer, the image containing at least hardware configuration information of the source computer, disk partitioning information of the source computer, a list of files installed on the source computer and operating-system-specific information of the source computer;

transmitting the image from the source computer to an installation engine;

recreating at the installation engine in an imaging area the software system of the source computer system based on information in the image; and

installing the recreated software system on the selected target computer systems.

2. A computer readable medium having computer executable instructions for performing the method recited in claim 1.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the list of files identifies at least for each file:

the full file name of the file; and

file attribute information associated with the file.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of retrieving an image of the source computer further comprises retrieving the image from a database.

5. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of reporting the status of the each target computer's installation of the recreated software system.

6. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of determining hardware compatibility of the target computer with the source computer by comparing at the installa-

tion engine the hardware configuration information identified in the image to the hardware configuration of the target machine.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein the image is transmitted to the installation engine in a compressed and encrypted form.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of recreating of the software system of the source computer further comprises:

initializing the imaging area based on the disk partition information;

for each file listed in the list of files, acquiring a copy of the file and writing the copy of the file to the imaging area; and

copying operating-system-specific information of the source computer to the imaging area.

9. The method of claim 8 wherein the step of acquiring a copy of the file further comprises:

if the file exists on the storage subsystem of the installation engine, retrieving the file from the storage subsystem at the installation engine; and

if the file does not exist on the storage subsystem of the installation engine requesting a copy of the file from the packaging engine.

10. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of installing the recreated software system on the selected target computer systems for each target computer further comprises:

at the installation engine, creating script files and storing the script files on the installation engine's storage system;

creating a communications connection between the installation engine and a thin-kernel on the target computer;

at the installation engine, sending a message to the thin-kernel the message containing storage subsystem initialization information;

at the target computer, initializing the local storage subsystem of the target computer based on the storage subsystem initialization information; and

at the target computer, copying the script files and the files of the imaging area to the local storage subsystem on the target computer.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein the step of copying script files and the files of the imaging area to the local storage subsystem on the target computer further comprises:

compressing and archiving the script files and the imaging area into a file at the installation engine;

transferring the file from the installation engine to the target computer; and

decompressing and unarchiving the file at the target computer.

12. The method of claim 10 wherein the subsystem initialization information identifies at least:

the number of disk partitions;

the name of each disk partition; and

the size of each disk partition.

13. The method of claim 10 wherein the message further identifies the location of the imaging area and the script files.

14. The method of claim 13 wherein the step of copying the files of the imaging area to the local storage subsystem on the target computer further comprises:

using the identity of the location of the imaging area, remotely mounting the file systems where the imaging area and script files reside; and

copying the script files and the files from the imaging area to the local storage subsystem on the target computer.

15. The method of claim 10 wherein the step of creating the script files further comprises:

examining the imaging area to determine the software to be configured;

reading details of the target computer system from a database; and

creating the script file based on the software to be configured and the details of the target computer system.

16. The method of claim 10 wherein the step of creating the script files further comprises:

a user logging into the installation engine's intelligent installation server;

the user specifying the contents of the script file; and

creating the script file based on the contents.

17. The method of claim 10 wherein the step of creating the script files further comprises:

a user specifying the contents of the script file and placing the contents of the file on a remote system;

the user logging into the installation engine's intelligent installation server and specifying the location of the file on the remote system; and

creating the script file by copying the file on the remote system to the installation engine's storage subsystem.

18. The method of claim 10 further comprising after the step of copying the script files:

at the target computer, rebooting the target computer; and

at the target computer, sending a message to the installation engine.

19. A computer-based system for duplicating a software system installed on a source computer onto a plurality of target computers comprising:

a deployment console;

an imaging and packaging server;

a source computer system;

an intelligent installation server;

a plurality of target computers;

a communications connection between the deployment console and the imaging and packaging server;

a communications between the imaging and packaging server and the source computer system;

a communications connection between the imaging and packaging server and the intelligent installation server;

a communications connection between the intelligent installation server and the plurality of target computers;

a means for selecting the source computer system from a plurality of source computer systems at the deployment console;

a means for creating and storing an image of a software system installed on the selected source computer at the imaging and packing server;

a means for transmitting the image from the imaging and packaging server to the intelligent installation server;

a means for selecting the plurality of target systems at the deployment console;

a means for recreating the software system of the source computer from information provided by the image at the intelligent installation server; and

a means for installing the recreated image on the selected plurality of target computer systems.

20. A computer-based method for creating an image of a first computer and saving the image on a second computer system the method comprising:

at the first computer, creating an image of the first computer, the image identifying at least the hardware configuration of the first computer, a list of files installed on the first computer and operating-system-specific information of the first computer;

sending the image to the second computer; and

at the second computer, storing the image in a database that is accessible by the second computer.

21. A computer readable medium having computer executable instructions for performing the method recited in claim 20.

22. The method of claim 20 wherein the list of files identifies at least for each file:
the full name of the file; and
file attribute information associated with the file.

23. The method of claim 20 further comprising the step of selecting the first computer system from a plurality of computer systems.

24. A computer-based method for recreating the software system of a source computer onto an installation engine the method comprising:
retrieving an image of the source computer from a database, the image containing a list of files that are installed on the source computer and disk partitioning information of the source computer;
initializing an imaging area located on the installation engine's storage subsystem using the disk partitioning information;
acquiring a copy of each file that is listed in the list of files; and
storing the retrieved files in the imaging area.

25. A computer readable medium having computer executable instructions for performing the method recited in claim 24.

26. The method of claim 24 wherein the list of files identifies at least for each file:
the full file name of the file; and
file attribute information associated with the file.

27. The method of claim 24 wherein the step of acquiring a copy of each file further comprises:
if the file exists on the storage subsystem of the installation engine, retrieving the file from the storage subsystem at the installation engine; and
if the file does not exist on the storage subsystem of the installation engine requesting a copy of the file from the packaging engine.